

Andover Post Office Appeal

Participant Statement

In the Matter of:

Andover, IL 61233 Post Office

Docket No. A2012-43

Ronald Peterson, Petitioner

Petitioner appealing the Postal Service's Final Determination concerning the Andover Post Office. The Final Determination was posted Oct. 17, 2011

I strongly urge the Postal Regulatory Commission to remand the Final Determination for the Andover Post Office to the Postal Service for further consideration.

Several petitioners' concerns have not been adequately answered about closing the Andover Post Office. Often, the only response received from the Postal Service is: "post offices are reviewed on a case by case basis." There is no mention why the Postal Service has not recognized the economic savings of closure of the Lynn Center facility. Andover is **centrally located** among the Andover, Osco (which is also scheduled to be closed) and Lynn townships. Andover has **242 PO boxes issued**, compared to 38 for Lynn Center; it is the **largest of the three towns**, with a **significant number of businesses** that use the post office; it is the **largest square foot facility** of the three; it has the longest remaining lease of the three (thru October of 2014 **with no cancellation clause**); it has fire and police protection (**fire station located across the street**) and it has **ample customer parking**, whereas the Lynn Center Post Office has very limited parking.

Andover is a **tourist destination**, with thousands of visitors coming every year to the many interesting sites (many listed on the **National Register of Historic Places**). Tourists often come to the post office for directions and to buy stamps (as needed, there is also a key kept at the post office for tourists to check out in order for them to obtain access to one of the historic buildings in Andover). How will tourists be served in Andover if the post office is closed?

There are conflicting/vague/ambiguous answers given by the Postal Service for concerns raised during the proposal posting period. For example, #13 says, "Customers were concerned about a change of ZIP Code." The answer was, "The proposed **change of the ZIP Code is necessary** due to 911 addressing requirements. #14 says, "Customers were concerned about a possible address change." The answer was, "Customers will be assigned a 911 address. The new address **will continue to use the** community name and **ZIP Code**." Several other answers are generic in nature

The Postal Service said one of the advantages of the proposal would be to "save time and energy for customers who drive to the post office to pick up mail." This is not true – they will have to drive to the cluster boxes, where no one will be there to assist them. In some cases, they will have to drive to the Lynn Center Post Office.

Closing the Andover Post Office **will hurt businesses**. The bank would **lose security of sensitive customer data and timing of mail delivery**. Other businesses depend on weighing packages for shipping and timing of mail delivery. Andover has 16 businesses (2 new ones in the past year), 2 churches, and 2 museums, whereas Lynn Center only has 5 businesses, no churches and no museums. Several residents patronize other businesses when they come to the post office. The Postal Service states that the mileage from Andover to Lynn Center is 3 miles, whereas the actual mileage is 3.4 miles or 6.8 miles round trip, or approximately 1,700 miles annually.

Businesses and residents will be burdened with expense and time by having to change their address on all their documents. Mail will also be delivered later in the day.

Persons with disabilities and the elderly will not receive assistance at CBU's like they receive at the post office. They will find it difficult to "follow the rules" in mailing packages, purchasing stamps, etc. Many types of medication will not stand the rigors of the cold and heat in cluster boxes. There are many other commodities shipped by mail (nursery stock, fruit, food items, etc.) that will be harmed by these same conditions. In Andover, there are severe extremes in temperatures: for example, in 2008/2009/2010, cold temperatures registered -11, -27, -21, -14, -17 & -15 in January & February; and hot temperatures registered +92, +94, +100, +93 +98 & +95 in June/July/August.

We were told in a letter dated May 5, 2011, that the USPS would **provide pickup and delivery of mail by rural route service**. At the June 7, 2011, informational meeting, we were informed that mail for Andover customers would be **placed in "cluster boxes."** We have not been told the location of these CBU's; whether there will be ample parking at that location; if the parking area and CBU's will be wheel chair/handicapped-accessible; and how the area will be serviced (trash clean-up, cleaning snow and ice off the boxes & snow plowing for the parking area).

In the "Responsiveness to Community Postal Needs," Number IV lists Economic Savings. The following statistics are shown: postmaster salary - \$33,168, fringe benefits - 11,111, annual lease costs - \$5,112, for an annual costs total of \$49,391; annual cost of replacement service - \$27,061. The additional 15.36 weekly hours for the rural carrier to **adequately** service 240 customers as stated by the Postal Service is way too low; the annual cost does not include property lease expenses for the CBU's location; and does not include maintenance costs like snow removal for the parking area and sidewalks, security lighting and trash pickup. The annual lease cost of \$5,112 and the one-time expense of \$20,800 should also be included in the replacement cost, bringing the three-year total to \$31,706, or **\$10,569 savings per year** based on the original Postal Service figures. This is a very minimal savings for the disruption it will cause to an entire community!

The postmaster vacancy in Andover was never posted or advertised. The last postmaster retired September 30, 2009. The reason given was that a hiring freeze was in effect then. A hiring freeze did not take effect until July 28, 2010 – **almost ten months later**. The Postal Service used this vacancy as an excuse to "investigate the feasibility of providing service by alternate means."